

The LAPSE of ENOCH WENTWORTH

By ISABEL GORDON CURTIS
Author of "The Woman from Wolverton"
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SYNOPSIS.

Enoch Wentworth, newspaper man, and Andrew Merry, actor, after the guests at a poker party have departed, play a final hand the stakes of which give the winner absolute control over the future of the loser. Wentworth wins. They decide to keep the matter secret. Wentworth's sister, Dorcas, sees Merry depart and is interested in her brother's story of the actor.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

Andrew pulled the soft hat over his eyes and sprawled out on the rock ledge. Dorcas began with a nervous laugh. "It sounds like—presumption, I know so little of the world, only I have been studying you—"

"Am I worth the trouble?" he interrupted. "Worth the trouble! I don't believe you know yourself yet. You have a wonderful imagination and such knowledge of human nature. You could write a great play, many of them possibly. You know men and women. You have laid bare the souls of some of them when you talked with me. After you bring a being into life, think how you could make him live again on the stage!"

Dorcas jumped to her feet. "Andrew Merry, go to work! Show them what you can do, if for nothing else than to please me and prove that I haven't made a mistake."

"Miss Dorcas, sit down." The girl looked at her companion curiously. "Let me shake hands on a bargain," he laughed. "That's a foolish little ceremony I used to go through with mother when I was a boy. If I promised faithfully I would do anything, I shook hands on it."

Dorcas held out her hand cordially. Her clasp was magnetic.

"Sit down again and listen," he begged. "For years and years and years I've had a play crystallizing in my mind. It's all blocked out. Let me tell you about it."

Dorcas sat leaning forward, her face between her hands, her eyes glowing with interest.

"My hero is cashier in a bank, a young fellow of good family, jovial, happy-go-lucky, generous, democratic. He has married the bank president's daughter, who is exactly his opposite—cold blooded, haughty, selfish and fond of luxury. There is a sweet, tender little daughter. The love between the father and the child is beautiful. The man, trusting to luck to see him through, steals for years, covering his defalcations in the cleverest way. He had to get money, for his wife denies herself nothing. The father-in-law discovers the crime, exposes it to his daughter, then drops dead. She gives her husband up to public justice. His trial comes off and he is sentenced to twenty years. The child is told that she is fatherless. The wife takes her father's fortune and goes West. When the second act opens she has divorced the husband and married again. The child is a lovely, true-hearted woman. She is engaged to the young mayor of the city, and preparations are afoot for the wedding, when she receives a letter from the one man who remained loyal to her father—an old janitor at the bank. He tells her the story which had been hidden from her. The father, penniless, broken down, hopeless, is to leave prison in a few weeks. She confronts her mother, who denies the story, but later confesses. The girl breaks her engagement, leaves home, and goes East. The old janitor takes her to live near the prison until her father is released. Every day she watches the convicts at their lock-step tramp and sees her father. The closing of the act, when she meets him leaving prison, can be tremendous in human interest."

He turned to look at Dorcas.

"Go on," she said.

"The last act is laid in a New England village, among simple country people. The girl and her father are coming on a little farm. Her lover comes, having searched for her everywhere. She tells him the story. He marries her and takes the father home with them."

Merry paused. The sun had dropped below the horizon and the western sky glowed in red, gold and purple.

"When," cried Dorcas in a flush of enthusiasm, "when will you begin to write?"

"At once, tomorrow. I'll go away somewhere; I can't do it here."

"Go to Enoch," she said. "He will be delighted. He has such faith in you and he loves you. Besides, you'll have his sympathy. Poor Enoch, the one ambition of his life is to be a famous dramatist."

"No!" said Merry incredulously. "Don't tell him you know it. I discovered it by accident. I was tidying his desk one day. I came on a pile of manuscripts. There were dramas, comedies, tragedies, even comic operas. He has been writing that sort of thing for years and years."

"Dear, good, generous old Enoch!" "You will never tell him—never!" "I won't," said Merry.

They sat for a few minutes in silence. The flush of the sunset began to fade from the sky. Seagulls wheeled above their heads.

"We must go home," said Andrew. "Crossing these rocks in the dusk would be perilous."

Dorcas rose and followed him, clasping his outstretched hand. When they leaped down from the sea wall to the beach, the girl asked: "This is our last evening here?"

"I imagine so. You go to New Haven next week, don't you?"

Dorcas nodded. "Think of me working with all the courage and energy you have awakened. When the play is written I will bring it straight to you."

There was eager anticipation in her eyes. "When you come I will ask a favor. May I play the daughter of the convict?"

"You!" Andrew stopped and looked down at her intently. "You—you—dear child, you sweet, gracious woman!" Dorcas lifted her cool hands to her blushing cheeks.

"Listen! You don't think I could do it. I could. I have loved Shakespeare since I was a little girl. I know Juliet and Desdemona and Rosalind, but I've lived with Cordelia. I've loved her. I've seen into her soul. Your girl is Cordelia. I could play the part even if I have never been on the stage. Besides I can work; oh, you ought to see how I can work when I have to!"

"It is not that," Andrew protested. "You could play Cordelia—we'll call the girl 'Cordelia' now—as no one I know. It is not that. It is such a hard life—the one you would choose, and it is so different from anything you know."

Dorcas spoke impatiently. "Enoch said that. If I should go on the stage I would be no different from what I am today."

"Let us go home. There's Mrs. Hutchins' supper horn." They walked on in silence. That evening Merry sat for half an hour with an idle pen in his hand. At last he pulled a sheet of paper toward him and wrote in feverish haste:

Dear old Enoch—Send me \$100 to the Broadway today, please. Don't ask questions, don't try to find me; I'll turn up when I've finished some work. Your slave, MERRY.

CHAPTER IV.

The Play.

Enoch Wentworth sat before a table littered with sheets of manuscript when a knock sounded on the library door.

"In a second!" he cried. Then he tried to gather the pages together in numerical order.

"All right," cried a cheerful voice. "Lord, it's Merry!" whispered Enoch. He swept the sheets of paper into a drawer of his desk, then he rose and opened the door. Merry stepped into the room with a dancing light-hearted gaiety that Enoch had seen him don with his stage garb. Still it was accompanied by a dignity of man-

ner odd to the comedian, a dignity which had self-respect behind it. Wentworth put an arm about him affectionately.

"Have you come into a fortune, boy?" he asked with a laugh. "Better than that—I'm on the verge of making a fortune."

"Good!" Enoch pushed him into a comfortable chair and stood looking down at him. "Let's have the news, boy."

"I will," answered Merry slowly. "I've got to—I want your advice and help. I need it as I never needed it in my life before. Only—I'm not going to trot out a word of it until we are sure of a couple of hours clear. I can't stand a solitary interruption—today."

Wentworth shut and locked the door, then he opened a small cupboard. "What'll you have?" he asked, lifting down a couple of glasses.

"Nothing." Andrew pulled a large envelope from his pocket and sat down beside the fire. Wentworth faced him with an expectant look upon his face.

"You never guessed, I suppose, that I'm an incipient playwright?" "Never!" Enoch's tone was emphatic.

"Well, Merry laughed hilariously. "Well, I am, I'm the coming dramatist." "I take off my hat to you, boy," Enoch swept him a pantomime bow.

"Wait a minute." The comedian's face grew unusually resolute. "Wait, old man, you've got to take this seriously, or I won't tell you a blessed word about it."

Merry rose and laid his hand on Enoch's shoulder with an imploring gesture. "Dear old man, I want your help and guidance. I'm such a blamed unbusiness-like chump. If you hadn't

been head and right hand and mother, father and brother to me for years, as well as the truest friend a man ever had, I'd have been in the gutter. Enoch," Merry's face flushed, "if I win out, it means more to me than fame or wealth—it means the happiness of a lifetime."

"Andrew! A woman at last." The actor nodded gravely. "Yes, a woman at last."

"Not Drusilla?" "Oh, curb your curiosity," he laughed lightly; "you can't have everything at once. Now I'm going to read." Wentworth lit a cigar, leaned back in a leather chair, and turned his eyes steadfastly upon the man opposite him. Merry was a singularly dramatic reader. Across his face flashed each human emotion as he put it into words. Enoch forgot the outer world when Merry leaped into the words with which he had clothed a daughter's greeting to her outcast father—a father disqualified, hopeless, timid, stunned, dumb after the long separation from his fellows.

Wentworth's cigar went out and he forgot to light another. He sat in utter silence, a silence which was half critical, although at moments he was deeply stirred, partly by surprise, partly by unconscious emotion. He breathed a half-stifled sigh. This task, such a splendid achievement, had cost one man a month's labor! He remembered the years of ardent toil he had spent on what, as he realized sadly, was poor. It was worse than poor—it was futile. Even Dorcas had sadly but truthfully acknowledged its impossibility.

When Merry spoke the last word and the curtain fell, he looked up with triumph and joy shining in his eyes. Then he waited in silence, as if for ardent hands to clasp his own. It was an actor's pause for the thunder when he knows he has won his audience. Enoch's fingers lay clasped together on his knees, his eyes bent on the glowing caves of the coal fire. As the actor spoke his voice had a chill, shivering note in it.

"Say, old man, isn't it good? Tell me—don't you like it?" "Like it?" echoed Wentworth. He turned his eyes straight on Merry's questioning face. "Why, boy, it's magnificent. You'll pull Broadway to its feet with that. Merry, you've done a tremendous piece of work. That will live for—it ought to live for years."

"Thanks, old man, thanks with all my heart. You can't imagine how hard it was to wait for your verdict."

"It's wonderful," mused Wentworth. "It's a corker!"

"Now, old man," Andrew jumped to his feet and began to pace the room impatiently. "I want to rush it on the stage—quick! Quick, I say. Hecht will take it, I know."

"I suppose you'll play the convict?" "Good God, what else could I play?" Andrew stopped suddenly and looked down at Wentworth.

"You'll kill your reputation as a comedian."

"Perhaps you'll be interested in knowing that I've thrown up my part in 'The Left-over Bachelor.' No more doddering idiots for me! Why, it will be easy sledding to get this out. Last night I ran across a fellow who's rolling in money. He's crazy to get in on a theatrical venture. We can catch him, I know. I want you to have a big share, to manage the thing and make all you can out of it."

"Did you tell him it was—you play?" Enoch's tone was brusque.

"No, I thought I'd break that gently. He thinks now I'm a devil of an actor; he might imagine I couldn't have so much versatility; that my play might be one of the brand some actors turn out."

"Good," cried Enoch, warmly. "You have more sense than I gave you credit for."

"Really? Now, old pal, go back to bed. But tell me first when I can see you. I want a long talk with you."

"Make it four. I've a pile of work to do before that time."

"All right, four o'clock. Good-by." Wentworth hung up the receiver and passed a hand across his forehead; it was cold and damp. He did not return to bed, but dressed hurriedly, pausing once or twice to stare at himself in the mirror. His face looked unfamiliar. It seemed to have aged. There were lines about the clean-shaven mouth he had never noticed before.

At four o'clock Enoch sat in his library. A few seconds absorbed that he did not hear a step in the hall. When he lifted his eyes Merry stood before him. Wentworth stared for a second before he took the outstretched hand.

Merry had changed. He looked young, handsome and vivacious—he was better groomed. A few stems of Roman hyacinths sat jauntily in his buttonhole. His trimness seemed odd in contrast to the old whimsical carelessness, as if he had already achieved fame and was living up to it, dressing up to it. These were the thoughts

that flashed through Wentworth's mind while Merry took his hands affectionately between his own. Andrew was only a few years younger than Enoch, but occasionally he fell into fond, demonstrative ways which were boyish. Wentworth drew his hand away suddenly and pointed to the low chair opposite. His friend sat down half perplexed, half anxious.

"Say, old man, aren't you well? You look rosy."

"I'm well enough."

"You're working too hard, you always did!"

Wentworth did not answer. His eyes were studying a pattern in the rug beneath his feet.

"Say, Enoch, you're going to tend to the whole business, aren't you?" The newspaper man lifted his eyes. "Yes, I'm going to tend to the whole business. I'll make it the finest production that New York has seen in years. 'The House of Esterbrook' is going to win money and—fame."

"Good!" Merry jumped up and flung his arms around the shoulders of the older man.

"Sit down," said Enoch. "We're going to talk business."

He rose, walked to his desk, and emptied a drawerful of papers on the table. Merry watched him with a puzzled expression.

"You never guessed, Andrew, that your ambition was mine?" Enoch did not lift his eyes or pause for a reply. "For years and years and years I have dreamed just one dream, only one—that some day I might produce a great play. See how I worked!" He swept the manuscript into an untidy heap. There were thousands of sheets. He had written on paper like onion skin. It looked like toil—one had a feeling of years of toil—after a glance at the laboriously interlined and reconstructed sentences. Wentworth crushed it mercilessly into loose bunches and began to lay the pages by handfuls upon the revolving fire. A little flame climbed up and kindled them into a wavering blaze.

"Here, here, Enoch, old fellow," cried Merry, "don't!" There was a thrill of compassion in his voice. "Say, don't—this is a wicked thing to do."

Wentworth paid no heed to him. He gathered the sheets together with quiet deliberation, crushing them as one would crush some hated, despised living thing, and burned them with stolid satisfaction.

"That funeral's over," he said abruptly. "Now I'm in a mood for—business." He turned to his desk. Merry's eyes followed him. They were dim with unspoken sympathy, but it knew the man well enough not to put it into words.

Wentworth pulled out his key-ring, opened a drawer, and took the slip of paper from the yellow envelope. He stood staring at it for a moment. A wave of crimson swept across his face, then his mouth straightened into a cruel, inflexible line. Merry's eyes were still fixed on him. Enoch did not speak, but crossed the room with the paper in his hand and laid it on the table beside Merry. Andrew's eyes took it in with one sweeping glance; it was the bond he had signed when they played that last hand of poker.

"Do you remember this?" asked Wentworth abruptly.

"Of course. Say, old chap, what has that to do with our business? Oh, I know." He lifted his eyes with a relieved glance. "Of course it's an understood thing you're to run things, and as for money, Lord, I don't care for money. Take all you want of it. It's fame my heart's set on; I've a grand ambition and a thirst for greatness—as I told you—but it runs in only one direction; to win a name as a dramatist, a name that will live when my capering days are over. I want a halo; not such an aureole as Shakespeare's," his eyes sparkled and a smile lighted his face. "But a halo—I demand a halo. I'll be satisfied with nothing smaller than a cartwheel!"

He rose and went prancing buoyantly about the room on his toe tips, humming a fantastic waltz from "The King at Large." Wentworth sat with a grim, brooding look in his eyes. Andrew stopped to stare at him.

"Why so mum, sweet Sirrah?" he asked blithely.

"Merry," Wentworth spoke in an expressionless voice, "read that bond through—carefully. Read it aloud."

The actor picked up the sheet of paper and read it with dramatic gesture, bowing almost prostrate at each pause.

To Enoch Wentworth. I hereby pledge myself to you until death—to do your every bidding—to obey your every demand—to the extent of my physical and mental ability—you to furnish me with support.

ANDREW MERRY.

He dropped lightly upon his knees in front of Wentworth when he finished. "I await thine orders, most grave and reverend seigneur." Then he laid his fingers upon Wentworth's arm and looked up with an expectant smile.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Investigating Abroad. Miss Sophie Irene Loeb, a member of the New York state commission to examine into the question of widows' pensions and the housing of the poor, has been studying such questions in Europe for the last few months. She visited England, Scotland, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland and will report to the legislature of New York the result of her investigations. She says she found the best boarding out system in Scotland, where less than one per cent of poor children become criminals. A widowed mother in Denmark is not supported by the poor relief fund, but has an allowance that enables her to take care of her children. France has appropriated \$10,000,000 in allowances that the home may remain intact.

NO REAL EFFORT EVER VAIN Better to Strive for Success, and Meet Defeat, Than Mutely Accept Life of Littleness.

Better the sorriest citizen thinking he can take hold of life, and his faint spark of free-will can burn holes through the thicket than a worldful of orderly persons of regular habit and contented mind. Rather wilderness than that men should find this a locked world, where all the returns are in.

Better absurd mites, strutting over large landscapes, than such a flatness of cheery slaves, taking orders from their betters. Better a petty race should strive vainly, than accept its own littleness. If it is doomed to futility, let it at least live as if all the roads to victory were open.

So when we face the push and thrust of life in each generation, let us be glad that youth is claiming its right to live. Let the youth flourish and prosper, advises Harper's Weekly. It is wiser to tear down the temples than to accept defeat. Effort is finer than resignation, and peril is safer

than despair in routine. And by that high courage and fresh experiment, they defeat confusion, and lift their heads above despair. So the world is full of homes. Obscure men deal manfully with their stint of work. Countless unknown women suffer and love. Order gains on chaos. A will is at work upon the welter.

CHAPTER V. The Forfeit of the Bond. The telephone in Enoch Wentworth's room rang insistently. He had gone to bed three hours before, and he struggled to shake off sheer, stupid drowsiness. He rushed to the telephone. Its ring had become peremptory.

"Hello," he called briskly. "Hello, old chap," Merry answered him gaily. "The top of the morning to you."

"Good morning," Wentworth's alertness died in a second. Something flashed back to his mind, something unpleasant, and an ugly frown corrugated his brow.

"Grouchily this morning?" cried Merry with a laugh. "Or say, did I wake you from your beauty sleep?"

"You certainly did."

"Old man, I'm sorry, blamed sorry. Some day I'll show you I'm grateful. I couldn't sleep last night, I lay thinking of something I can do for you when my production begins to pay. I'm going to drag you away from the everlasting grind. We'll go to Switzerland next summer and carry out your dream. We'll sit on mountain tops, crane our necks over the edge of a crevasse, and skid down a glacier."

"I'd rather go back to bed," growled Wentworth.

"You lazy old duffer, you may go in a second, only I want to talk to you about the luckiest sort of accident. Last night I ran across a fellow who's rolling in money. He's crazy to get in on a theatrical venture. We can catch him, I know. I want you to have a big share, to manage the thing and make all you can out of it."

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URGES PLANTING OF TREES

Baltimore Newspaper Points Out How Much They Add to Appearance of City.

Baltimore can well approve of the movement for more city tree planting, launched by the Women's Civic League. There is no doubt other cities have paid more attention than has this to the subject, but it is one in which all who are working for a more attractive as well as for a larger and more prosperous city can well consider. While good care is taken of the trees in city parks and squares, those along the street curbs are sadly neglected, allowed to die and then rarely replaced. Yet it is no great task to make a tree grow along the sidewalk. A little careful trimming, a loosening of the earth at the roots now and then, a watch for bugs and borers, that's about all if the tree be strong and healthy when it is put in the ground. Of course, now and then an accident will happen and the tree be unrooted or broken by a runaway horse or a careless driver, but even then it can be easily replaced and when young a box placed around it, so as to shield it from harm.

Let us hope that this movement will succeed. A thoroughfare with handsome, healthy trees on either side is a city beauty spot and a valuable city asset. Land is too valuable in a metropolis to allow the creation and maintenance of large lawns, except in suburban districts, but there is plenty of room for trees, even in streets on which traffic is very heavy.

Arbor day, established to encourage tree-planting, has amounted to little in Baltimore, outside of the school-house program, but now it can be put to practical use for civic betterment and civic beauty. Plant a few now and you will be surprised at the result.—Baltimore American.

CHILDREN AID GOOD WORK Even the Smallest Show Enthusiasm in the Effort to Keep National Capital Attractive.

To turn the waste places of the city, the vacant lots and unsightly lawns, into beautiful gardens filled with blooming flowers and clinging vines is the object of the People's Gardens of Washington, and in the report for the past year, which has just been prepared, what has been accomplished along these lines is set forth. The building up of recreation gardens for the people of a neighborhood, the beautification of parkings and back yards of the city and general stimulation of interest in landscape gardening have been gone into with enthusiasm by the workers of the association and their labors have shown surprising results.

One of the noticeable facts concerning the work is that a major portion was done during the past year by little children. And it is in building up the gardening inclinations of the little one that the elders are becoming much interested and lending a hand themselves. The children, having acquired a taste for gardening, are the ones who are to make the capital beautiful in the years to come. It will fall upon them to enlarge the park spaces, preserve the trees and encourage the planting of dooryard flowers and flowering shrubs. The children have taken up the gardening idea as they would take up a new game. They have shown unusual thoroughness and the utmost joy in their work, and even better results are expected from their efforts during the spring and summer to come.

Good Plan for Small Town. Villages and small towns in all parts of the United States would do well to follow the example of Williamstown, Mass. There the town council has adopted a scheme proposed by President Garfield of Williams college, and providing that there shall be planted annually along the roadside of the town a number of trees that shall be valuable for commercial as well as ornamental purposes. President Garfield, it seems, derived his idea from France, where the plan has been carried out successfully and has been found to be decidedly worth while.

Conditions vary in different towns and villages of course, and in some a scheme of this sort might be undesirable or impracticable. These, however, are the exceptions, and for a majority of our smaller communities adoption of Dr. Garfield's plan would be an excellent thing. One must wait a long time, it is true, before the trees thus planted become valuable commercially, and it may be that the public fund would never be swelled very largely by income derived from them. Yet it is France that income is found to be sufficiently large to take care of the town's most beautiful ornaments, its trees, and in addition leave something over for other purposes, there seems to be no good reason why the same thing should not be true in this country.

Boost, Don't Knock. Don't criticize the old town, unless you can offer a remedy.

Words Are as Cheap as Ever. An English economist announces that a world-wide decline in the price of commodities has begun, and that probably it will be more pronounced at the end of the year.

He Got Them. "I want damages," shouted the bruised and battered citizen who had just been beaten up by his athletic rival. "I think," replied his friend and adviser, after a critical inspection, "that if you look in the glass you'll find you've got 'em."

Are There That Many? Church—I see that Milwaukee is preparing to change over one hundred street names.

Gotham—Going to name the streets after the different establishments which made the city famous, probably.

CANADA'S PLACE AS A PRODUCER

Canada Is Getting a Great Many Americans.

"Three young provinces, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta," says a New York financial journal, "have already made Winnipeg one of the greatest primary wheat markets of the world. In 1904 they raised 58,000,000 bushels of wheat. Five years later they produced 150,000,000 bushels. In 1913 the crop approximated 200,000,000 bushels. At the present rate of progress Canada must soon pass France and India, and stand third in the line of wheat producers. Ultimately it will dispute with Russia and the United States for the first position. Wheat has been the pioneer of our development. Undoubtedly it will prove the same with Canada. In the last calendar year our trade with Canada amounted to 497 million dollars. Only with two countries—the United Kingdom and Germany—is our trade greater. No vivid imagination is needed to see what the future development of Canada means to the people of the United States."

The influx of American settlers to the Canadian prairies is now in full swing. Within the past few days over 80 of those arrived at Bassano carrying with them effects and capital to the value of \$100,000. Fifty settlers from Oregon arrived in Alberta a few days ago; while 15 families of settlers from the state of Colorado arrived at Calgary on their journey northwards. The goods and personal effects of this party filled 20 box cars. Of live stock alone they had 175 horses, 15 cows and 2,000 head of poultry. Another class of settler has arrived at Peora, 110 miles west of Edmonton, where no fewer than 200 German farmers have taken up land. These are from good farming families and brought with them a large amount of capital.

Then in South Western Saskatchewan, there are large numbers settling, these from the United States predominating, while in the northern and central portions of all these provinces, the settlement of new people is going on steadily. Early in April, Peter Goertz arrived in Cardiff after a six-day journey from McPherson, Kansas. Mr. Goertz who had purchased land here was in charge of a party of 38 people from the same part of Kansas and they came through with a special train which included all their stock and implements. The equipment was all Rock Island cars, and was the first full immigrant train ever sent out by that railroad. The farms purchased by the members of the party are amongst the best in the district.

When the Panama exposition opens next year any of the three transcontinental lines in Canada will make convenient means of transport for those going to visit, and in doing so agricultural districts of Western Canada can be seen, and ocular demonstration given those who have heard but not before seen, of that which has attracted so many hundreds of thousands of American settlers.—Advertiser.</